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ABSTRACT

The objectives and programs involved in public library service to children in the Northwest Territories (NWT) are not very different from those of other small public library systems. However, program operation is affected by the vast distances involved, the isolation of the communities, and the presence of ethnic groups whose language had no written form until a century ago. Service to this area is provided by the Northwest Territories Public Library Services. During the six years since a children's librarian was appointed, new facets of the children's program have gradually been introduced. Through cooperation with the Department of Education, visits are made to schools for storytelling and talks on library services. NWT aids local librarians through workshops, booklists, and the encouragement of interlibrary loan. A wide range of children must be provided for, including those for whom English is a second language. There is still a deficit of materials suited to the languages and cultures of these children. The Department of Education has been given the sole responsibility for audiovisual materials, but improved cooperation between the schools and the NWT libraries will allow for a sharing of media resources and improved service to small communities. (Author/SL)

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Beyond the City:
Library Service to children in the Northwest Territories, Canada.

Prepared for
The Sub-section on Library Work with Children.

To be presented
at
The International Federation
of
Library Associations' Congress,
Washington, D. C., U.S.A.
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May, 1974.

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Beyond the city; library service to children in the Northwest Territories, Canada.

Despite the area covered and the sparsity of population, public library service to children in the Northwest Territories is, in essence, not very different from that in other small library systems. The goals of the service are identical i.e. to provide a child with a variety of experiences through various media, which will assist with his/her emotional and intellectual growth. The programmes to assist in achieving these goals would immediately be recognizable as basic to library work with children in whatever environment. It is in the area of implementing the programmes that we find that, though our problems in themselves are not unique, they do tend to be magnified by the distances involved; the isolation of the communities, one from another; and the cultural patterns of ethnic groups in whose own language there are no words for libraries and books, where there was no written form of the language until less than a hundred years ago, with which to record their culture.

The Northwest Territories lies north of the 60th parallel, the most northerly part of the North American Continent, and is approximately 1 1/3 million square miles in area, with a population of approximately 40,000. The population falls into the following basic groups: 37% Eskimo; 20% Indian; 20% Metis; and others 23%, who live in sixty communities of varying sizes. The largest centres and the greatest concentration of population are to be found in the Mackenzie District, in the Western Arctic. Here live all the Indian and Metis people, with some Eskimo in the part of the Mackenzie which falls north of the Arctic Circle. In the Keewatin and Baffin areas are to be found the majority of the Eskimo population, virtually no Indian people and a much smaller percentage of non-native people than in the Mackenzie.

The terrain of the Mackenzie Valley is wooded and arable well down the valley. The trees diminish in size and thickness the further north one progresses but there are trees throughout the Mackenzie Delta area. Oil exploration and extraction, gold, lead and zinc mining, shipping and expediting, are industries which already exist. It is down this valley that a natural gas pipeline may very well come in the next few years and it is in this same valley that the controversial Mackenzie Highway is under construction. The encroachment of southern civilization with both its social benefits and evils is inevitable; indeed, has already started. Learning how to adapt to an accelerated rate of change will require a monumental effort of all the people, regardless of ethnic origin.

By contrast, the Keewatin and Baffin areas seem like a different world. The Eskimo people have always been a special interest group, with a pride in their crafts of soapstone and ivory carving; silk screen, and offset prints; and their ability to cope with a harsh environment, treeless and swept by cruel winds and racked by bitter temperatures in winter; and in summer, a place of sudden beauty with mosses, lichens and berries, which yield dyes for the crafts. Hunting and fishing still provide much of the food and the skins are worked into kamiks and parkas and mitts. What industry there is is more of the cottage type and run by Co-operatives of the local people. Some of the worse aspects of southern Canadian life have already reached into these communities though and the increasing abuse of alcohol is causing much concern.

Transportation is mainly by air. While there is a road system between most of the southern Mackenzie communities, it extends only as far North as Fort Simpson at this time. There are three main airlines travelling due north from their southern bases in Edmonton, Winnipeg and Montreal, as well as numerous charter companies. In addition, a

Grumman Gulfstream turbo-prop aircraft is leased by the Government of the Northwest Territories for weekly trips to the Eastern Arctic and for special charters. Practically every community has facilities for winter air strips and most have summer facilities as well. During summer, there is barge traffic down the Mackenzie River, taking supplies to the settlements along the river and the Arctic coast line. Similarly there is an annual sealift for supplies to the communities on the coasts of Hudson Bay, Baffin Island and the Arctic archipelago. The Ministry of Transport Coastguard patrol maintains a regular surveillance. There is no regular passenger traffic by water, other than that of tourists on the cruise ship NORWETA on the Mackenzie, or parties travelling by canoe.

Public library service in the Northwest Territories is provided through the Territorial library system, known as the N.W.T. Public Library Services. It is a government programme, started in 1965 and assented to by Ordinance in November, 1966. The headquarters of the library system is at Hay River, on the south shore of Great Slave Lake. It was here that the Council of the day recommended the construction of the combined public library, system headquarters building, which was the main N.W.T. project commemorating the Centennial of Confederation, in 1967. This particular project was chosen because the needs of several small community libraries, which had been started by volunteers with donations of books and a very inadequate system of grants, warranted a properly organized system of library service. All the existing community libraries have become part of the Territorial library system. Membership is agreed to and sponsored by the local civic authority, with option to appoint a library committee, if they so desire. It entitles the smaller communities to a regular book exchange three times a year; payment of their local librarian and mail request service with access to Interlibrary Loan, where necessary. Communities of Hamlet status and above,

who are financially able to support adequate accommodation, are having their collections increased to a minimum of three books per capita, as well as having the benefits of the smaller communities.

Of the sixty N.W.T. communities, the library system provides some level of local service to twenty-two, scattered from the Mackenzie Delta to Baffin Island (see appended map for locations). In these communities is to be found 70% of the total population of the N.W.T. Because it would not be feasible to attempt to serve all the communities direct from Hay River, service from this point is limited to the Mackenzie District only and branches of the headquarters operation have been established at Rankin Inlet and Frobisher Bay to serve member libraries in the Keewatin and Baffin respectively. At present, this de-centralization consists only of having the new pre-processed books shipped direct from the supplier, rather than having them all sent via Hay River. The clerical work of clearing the invoices, etc. is handled by part-time local people. The ordering and selection of books to be sent out to the member libraries in these areas is performed at Hay River, using the stock records sent in from the two branches, to make up the blocks of 300 books which are exchanged three times at year. All movement of library materials is by air, except in the southern Mackenzie area.

It should also be mentioned that borrowing by mail from Hay River is a service available to those communities with no local library service. For various reasons this service has yet to be promoted and therefore fully utilized.

The staffing of the system is a happy balance of 8 full-time permanent staff, including three professionals and a library technician, all based at the headquarters, and some 50 Local Librarians, part-time, paid casual employees, who operate the community libraries. Because

the Local Librarians are mainly housewives who have only the in-training provided by the professional staff, there is a constant flow of communication by various means: letter; phone; telex; and personal visits by headquarters staff, as well as an annual visit to the headquarters by all the Local Librarians for a three day workshop. All details of the operational routines are written down in a handbook and every newly appointed Local Librarian is given a workshop on this handbook. Rules and regulations, as far as the public is concerned are kept to a minimum. For instance there are no fines for overdue books.

During the six years since a Children's Librarian was first appointed, new facets to Children's programme have gradually been introduced. Right from the beginning, the programme had the co-operation of the Department of Education, in enabling the Children's Librarian to make an annual visit to the schools in communities with a member library and speak to classes about the library service, tell stories to the younger grades and give book talks to the older ones. As much as a year later, a small child has appeared at a circulation desk and asked for the book the Library Lady talked about the last time she was in the community. This programme has, of course, encouraged the use of the school library as well as the community library. Also at the time of the school visit, the Children's Librarian has worked with any of the teachers who asked for assistance in discussing book selection and the various tools available; story-telling techniques and encouraged the reading of fiction to the class on a regular basis to lead the children to other materials in the school and community libraries. In some of the larger communities, school classes make a visit to the public library, first of all to be introduced to the library and then, in some cases, to return often enough to become accustomed to the idea of regular use of the library. Frequent visits were made by one remedial class in Hay River and within a fairly short period of time, several of the children had joined the library and

become regular users of their own volition.

At each annual workshop, a session is devoted to children's work, particularly storytelling. Several of the libraries, but not all, by any means, have a regular storyhour through the winter. Some Local Librarians feel more at home telling stories than others do and, while everybody is encouraged to attempt to do so, we recognized that not everyone has a talent in this direction. A list of suitable stories, entitled TALES FOR THE TELLING, was compiled early on in the programme, and notes and information on storytelling are available to all the Local Librarians. One facet of this work which has gone over very successfully in Rankin Inlet is the storyhour given by Tautunngi in Eskimo (She does not speak any English). We would like to see more of the tradition of handing down folktales in this way developed and hope to be able to do this through the use of audio tapes. Various groups have already collected a number of these tales and though in many instances, the circulation of tapes would be limited to areas where the language or dialect was understood, nevertheless, we feel it would do much to perpetuate the northern culture.

It is in the area of children's work that the problems of distance and lack of professional supervision of the Local Librarians is most accentuated. By and large, children need greater guidance than adults, which means that the Local Librarians must know their chilren's collection, particularly the fiction. It is not easy in one visit a year by the Children's Librarian and the annual workshop to get the Local Librarians to appreciate the importance of working at this area. To assist them, a couple of booklists have been prepared: one on fiction arranged by topic or general interest; and the other on replacement titles for popular series fiction. Copies of these lists are available for viewing. The use of the request service is promoted, even to the extent of occasionally going to Inter-library Loan for a special child's

request, easily obtained through our Telex link with the National Library, in Ottawa. Adult requests still far outnumber children's but children are starting to make greater use of this service and we expect to see this use grow over the years.

The latest addition to the children's programme, has been the introduction of puppets during the school visits. The response from the children has been tremendous, and requests have come for workshops in puppet making and performances from teachers and other interested people. This coming season, a venture will be made into the realm of modifying an Eskimo folktale for a puppet show. From this we hope will grow attempts by the children themselves to make their own puppets and write the scripts, taking Indian and Eskimo legends as their base.

The contests for Young Canada's Book Week (November 15-22 annually) have met with moderate success over the years. Posters and other promotional material are distributed to all the member libraries. Some competitions bring a better response than others and in the area of art work, the children of different cultures are fairly evenly matched. An original story writing competition was held one year but all the stories submitted were in English. Whatever the problems with translation, which would be overcome more easily now than a couple of years ago, if this type of competition were to be held again, it would be left open for the children to write in the language preferred. Hopefully, it will be possible, eventually, to assemble a collection of stories for Northern children by Northern children.

The selection of materials has to take into account a very wide spectrum of interests and needs. On the one hand there are children of parents whose work has brought them to the North. Many of these homes have an academic background and the children therefore need particularly

stimulating material. On the other hand are children from the native cultures to many of whom English is a second language and who need high interest, low vocabulary level materials and audio-visual materials.

This leads to a very important deficiency not only in the library service, but as a general fact throughout the Northwest Territories. There is an almost complete lack of printed materials in the native northern languages. For the past three or four years, the Department of Education has been developing a cultural inclusion programme and, as part of this, has produced some books in the Dogrib language: the 'Tendi' series and the 'Johnny' series; other books in English about the Chipewyan way of life; and several publications in syllabics and English written and illustrated by a very talented Eskimo artist with a delightful sense of humour. Samples of these materials are available for viewing.

Certainly in the beginning school years for the children in the North, it is important that tools like alphabet books and beginning readers should be relevant to the world around them. Although the situation in many ways is not unlike the rural situation in southern Canada, nevertheless, depending on what part of the North they live in, children are far more familiar with the polar bear, the moose, the caribou, than they are with cows or horses. Consequently, when they start learning, words must be meaningful, attached to relevant objects. Also, many children start school unable to speak English and it has been considered important that, for the first year or so of the child's time in school, he or she should be able to work in his native language. This practice is increasing across the North in the more remote and smaller settlements, where the need is greatest for this type of learning situation. Despite the fact that it is available in the schools, the library service also stocks this material because there is little

else in native languages for children. There are a number of northern newsletters which are printed in both English and syllabics and there are one or two periodicals, also in syllabics, put out by the Oblate Fathers, and the Federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, but these are more of adult interest. It is of some interest to note that the Government of the N.W.T. news publication published by the Information Services Department, for Indian people is written only in English because of the many different Indian languages.

At the beginning of this paper, I mentioned that the Territorial library system was not, in essence, any different from any other small library system in that the programmes we have for children would be recognized as belonging in any children's library service. I think this occasion is as good as any to take a look at the children's service as it is at present, and question whether or not it should be the same as any other small library system, whether there should not be a different emphasis. After all, about three quarters of the children come from a background in which, as I mentioned earlier, libraries, books, recorded literature have had no natural evolutionary development. For the second year in a row, the circulation figures for children have decreased. The most obvious and accountable reason for this, of course, is the coming of live television to a number of communities in the North. A visual medium. And the only way to compete with a visual medium is to provide a counter visual medium; in effect, fight fire with fire. However, the content of the material must be equally as captivating as that provided on TV. To this end, videotape equipment lends itself particularly well. Although, so far, it has been used primarily for reproducing tapes obtained from other sources or for social animation type programmes, there is a growing awareness that here is the means of creating materials with real relevancy to the cultural situation; a means of creating current archives by recording many of the cultural ways

which are fast disappearing, as well as a medium of instant translation. Parents would not be so concerned that children might lose sight of their cultural heritage if this were retained as a visual record made by and with people they know. How much easier to have the programme made in the original language and to dub in dialect changes or instant translation than to wait for the painstaking work of written translation. There are many subject areas at all comprehension levels which could be covered by this medium, of which the intrinsic value of its relevancy would far outweigh what it might lack in professional polish.

The Department of Education has been given the responsibility for audio-visual equipment and materials, so there is little hope of developing a strong Library Services-based programme using filmstrips, slides, videotapes, etc. This situation, together with the statement of the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories at the opening session of Council, last January, that duplication of services in communities can no longer be afforded, especially when this necessitates the duplication of physical facilities with their accompanying utilities costs, has made us take a serious look at combining the provision of school and public library services to communities. There are many factors for and against this but if one looks at the needs of small communities in the North realistically, a combining of school and library services is the most pragmatic approach to total library service to the community. In this way, the community library would have access to the audio-visual materials it needs and the school libraries, which have no centralized organization and have been so sadly lacking for many years in their basic collections, would have access to the materials in the community library, and the back-up of the resources of the Territorial library system.

In conclusion, then, the pattern of the future of library service to both children and adults in the Northwest Territories may well develop

as follows:

(a) In smaller communities, the combination of school and library service to meet the total needs of the community, with its accompanying benefits of mutual access to audio-visual materials and equipment and wider use of the physical plant of school by the community.

(b) An increase in the amount of material relevant to the needs of the northern population particularly through the use of videotapes.

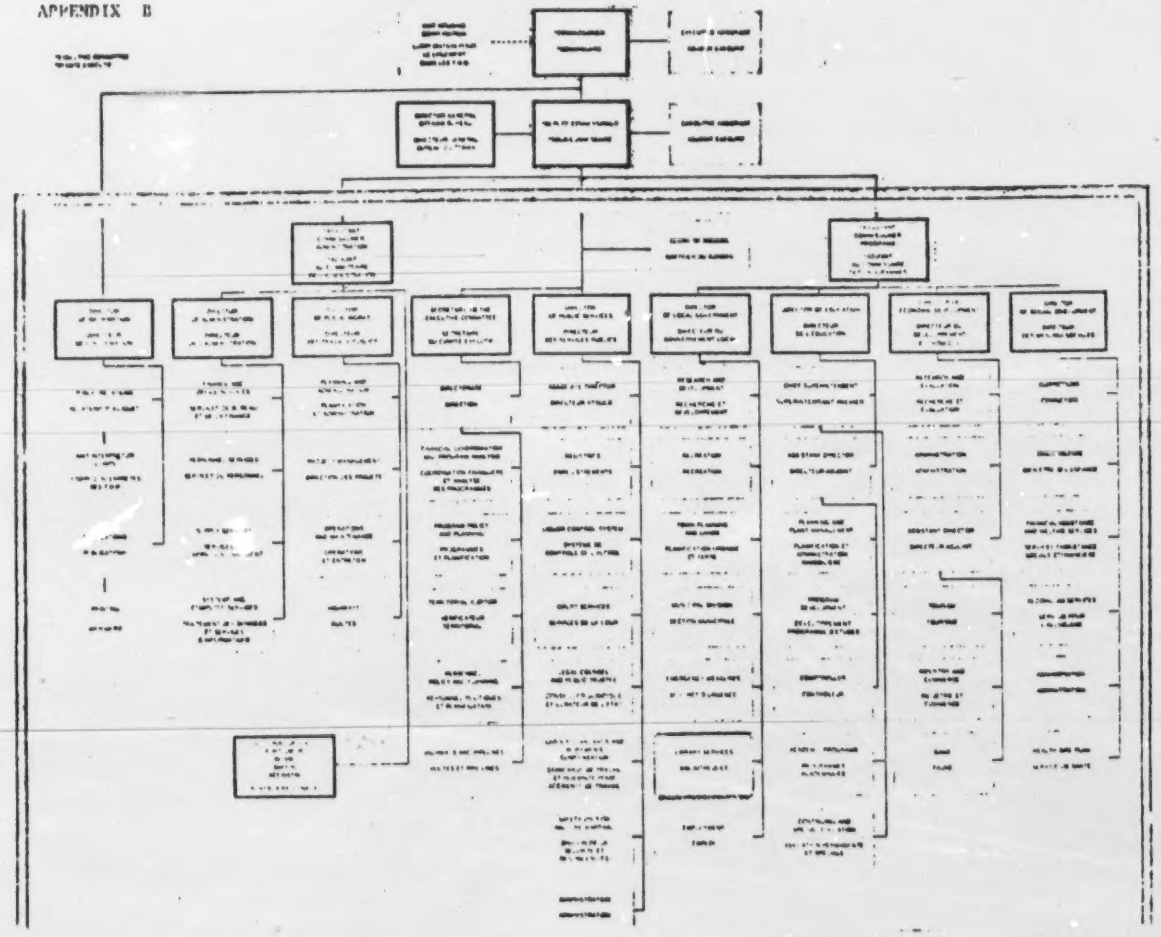
(c) Greater involvement on the part of the community in the library programme by participating in the creation of relevant material.

With co-operation and the co-ordination of resources there is a great potential to provide even the smallest and remotest settlement with the quality of library service so essential to assist with this time of change in life style in Canada's Northwest Territories.

Government of the Northwest Territories — Gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-Ouest

Organization Chart — Organigramme

APPENDIX B



APPENDIX C

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES

DATE	# SERVICE POINTS ADDED	NAME OF SERVICE POINTS ADDED	TOTAL
BY MARCH 31/67	2	FORT SMITH; INUVIK	2
BY MARCH 31/68	4	CAMBRIDGE BAY; FROBISHER BAY HAY RIVER; YELLOWKNIFE	6
BY MARCH 31/69	2	FORT SIMPSON; PINE POINT	8
BY MARCH 31/70	6	CORAL HARBOUR; FORT FRANKLIN: FORT MACPHERSON; HOLMAN ISLAND (50 BK. DEPOSIT); RANKIN INLET; TUKTOYAKTUK	14
BY MARCH 31/71	3	JEAN-MARIE RIVER (50 BK. DEPOSIT); NORMAN WELLS: WRIGLEY (50BK. DEPOSIT) (FORT FRANKLIN CLOSED)	16
BY MARCH 31/72	4	AKLAVIK; AKUDLIK (50 BK. DEPOSIT); ESKIMO POINT; FORT NORMAN (JEAN-MARIE RIVER & HOLMAN ISLAND CLOSED)	18
BY MARCH 31/73	6	COPPERMINE; IGLOOLIK; PANGNIRTUNG; BLACKWATER RIVER D.P.W. CAMP) PORT RADIUM) (50 BK. DEPOSIT) WILLOW LAKE RIVER D.P.W. CAMP) (WRIGLEY CLOSED)	23

APPENDICES

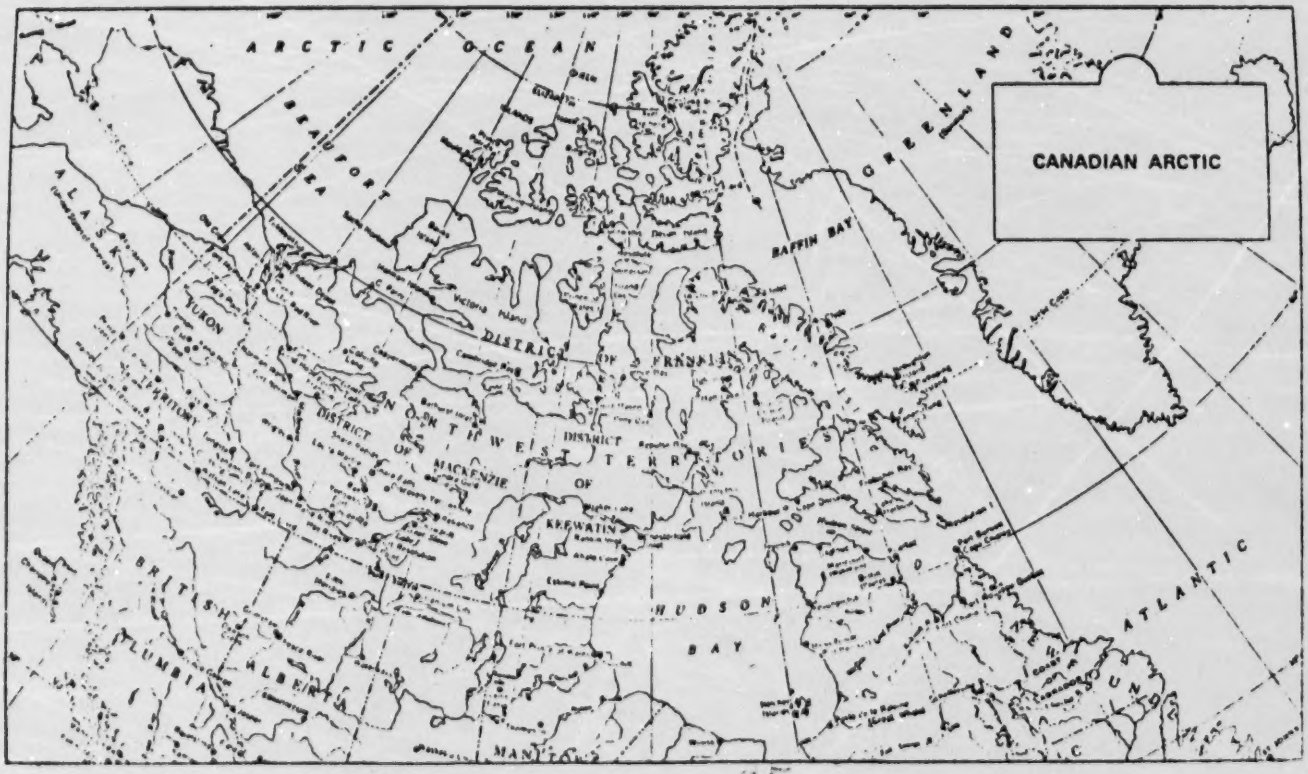
A. MAP OF THE CANADIAN ARCTIC

B. N.W.T. GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION CHART

C. SERVICE POINTS 1967 -

D. ANNUAL STATISTICS 1969 -

APPENDIX A



Service Points - N.W.T. Public Library Services.

BY APRIL 30/74 4 FORT RESOLUTION;
HOLMAN ISLAND)
REPULSE BAY) (50 BK. DEPOSIT)
TERRA MINES)

(PORT RADIUM CLOSED)

PRESENT SERVICE POINTS:

AKLAVIK;	FORT SIMPSON;	PANGNIRTUNG;
CAMBRIDGE BAY;	FORT SMITH;	PINE POINT;
COPPERMINE;	FROBISHER BAY;	RANKIN INLET;
ESKIMO POINT;	HAY RIVER;	TUKTOYAKTUK;
FORT MCPHERSON;	INGLOOLIK;	YELLOWKNIFE.
FORT NORMAN;	INUVIK;	
FORT RESOLUTION;	NORMAN WELLS;	

DEPOSIT COLLECTIONS: (50 BOOKS)

AKUDLIK;	REPULSE BAY;
BLACKWATER RIVER D.P.W. CAMP;	TERRA MINES;
HOLMAN ISLAND;	WILLOW LAKE RIVER D.P.W. CAMP

PERIODICALS ONLY: (INTERIM SERVICE) CORAL HARBOUR

HEADQUARTERS POOL: Direct service by mail to individual readers with no local library service.

APPENDIX D

N.W.T. PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES
STATISTICAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR ENDING MARCH 31	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974
ESTIMATED TOTAL POPULATION	32,000	33,000	34,000	35,000	37,000	39,000
ESTIMATED POPULATION SERVED TO DATE	15,784	19,068	22,882	22,223 *	25,683	27,624
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION	49.33	57.78	67.3	63.49	69.41	70.0
REGISTERED BORROWERS			5,523	6,243	7,821	6,916
ADULT AND YOUNG ADULT			2,681	3,448	4,590	4,248
JUVENILE			2,842	2,795	3,231	2,668
BOOK STOCK IN SERVICE POINTS OTHER THAN H.Q.	11,134	15,786	25,413	35,724	40,888	46,577
CIRCULATION	38,444	64,635	72,860	96,194	100,143	82,748
ADULT & YOUNG ADULT			41,856	48,013	51,578	43,607
JUVENILE			31,004	38,299	37,545	29,702
MISCELLANEOUS (Paperbacks, Magazines, Etc.)				9,882	11,020	9,439
REQUESTS SUPPLIED TO BORROWERS			850	1,311	1,940	2,106
FROM WITHIN SYSTEM			754	1,157	1,581	1,727
THROUGH INTERLIBRARY LOAN			96	154	359	326
PERIODICALS	217	334	536	962	1,201	1,299

*Adjustment made to settlement population figures from 1971 census